

INTRODUCTORY GUIDANCE FOR THE PREPARATION FOR & CELEBRATION OF FIRST SACRAMENTS 2021-2022

Following the interruption over the last 18 months to some or all of the preparation for and celebration of First Reconciliation, First Holy Communion and Confirmation, we are providing in this document some information and some suggestions to try to help you as you plan for the preparation and celebration of these sacraments in the coming year. The suggestions will not suit all situations in every parish, but we hope that they provoke thoughts to help you with your planning, preparation and celebration. We will all need to be flexible, however, and try to adapt quickly if legal restrictions become tighter again, and to suit the particular circumstances of our parishes and families.

Preparation for the Sacraments

Many parishes will have returned to arranging 'physical' meetings, but during the last 18 months the Vicariate for Education (with the support of a group of catechists) has developed a model to support 'home learning' catechesis including (where possible) online meetings with catechists. Some parishes may like to consider a 'blended' approach to preparation in the future, combining some physical meetings with some virtual meetings.

Please see below some guidance for 'home learning' which can complement the work done through physical and virtual meetings. More detailed guidance for home learning and for running virtual meetings is given in the Home Learning Guidance link on the website (under ***Catechists' Resources > Home Learning Guidance***).

Suggested Timetable for Preparation

For each sacrament you may like to use the following pattern:

- Letter to parents & carers through parishes/schools:
 - at least 4-6 weeks before preparation begins
- Enrolment & parents'/carers' introduction:
 - at least 2-4 weeks before preparation begins
- Preparation: 5, 7 or 6 sessions depending on the Sacrament

Home Learning

Parish catechists will need to work closely together to ensure that catechists for all the sacraments within the same parish know how to deliver catechesis by 'home learning' and that they support each other in this delivery.

A letter (available through parishes and schools) should establish the number of candidates you will have for sacramental preparation. An Enrolment Form should establish how to contact families and candidates and whether candidates will be able to participate in online meetings. You will find a model ***Specimen Letter to Parents and Carers*** and ***Enrolment and Consent Form*** (which can be used for all three sacraments) in the ***First Sacraments > Catechists' Resources*** section of the diocesan website (see below for details). Please note that the final page of the Enrolment Form concerns those children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.

For all candidates, you will need to consider how to distribute the resources and any extra materials you want them to have. Families may be able to download most of the extra materials or you may wish to do this for them.

For candidates who are **not** able to attend online meetings, establish how you will contact candidates and how they will deliver feedback. For safeguarding reasons, calls must not be made from catechists' personal mobile phones or landlines. Parishes will need to arrange for the use of their administrative phone or to purchase a cheap 'Pay as You Go' mobile phone specifically for this purpose.

For candidates who are able to attend online meetings, you will need to ensure: that the Consent Form has been completed (a model ***Consent Form*** is attached to the model ***Enrolment Form***), that safeguarding procedures for videoconferencing with children are followed and a Risk Assessment completed (a model ***Risk Assessment*** can be found under ***Safeguarding Advice*** on the ***First Sacraments*** section of the diocesan website), that at least two catechists attend every meeting and that catechists are familiar with safeguarding policies and procedures. For more information, see the ***Setting Up Online Meetings Guidance*** link (under ***Catechists' Resources > Home Learning Guidance***).

Parishes will need to set up an appropriate group videoconferencing account (Zoom, Microsoft Teams, etc.). For safeguarding reasons, personal accounts must not be used. An email account for parish catechists is available for each

parish to ensure a safe and free package using Microsoft Office (Microsoft Teams). To activate this account, the Parish Priest will need to nominate a catechist and contact:

Jessica Wilkinson (jessica.wilkinson@dioceseofleeds.org.uk)

or Greg Stacey (gregory.stacey@dioceseofleeds.org.uk).

See the **Microsoft Teams Guidance Video** link (under **Catechists' Resources > Home Learning Guidance**) for more information about using Microsoft Teams.

For more detailed advice see the sections on **Home Learning Guidance** (for each of the sacraments) and **Safeguarding Advice**, under the **Catechists' Resources** section under the **First Sacraments** section of the diocesan website.

Home Learning Online Material

A large additional range of resources has been developed for families to use at home with their children. A new 'tile' has been created on the diocesan website (www.dioceseofleeds.org.uk). The tile is entitled **First Sacraments** and is located among the other tiles which can be found by scrolling down on the **Home Page** of the diocesan website.

When you click on the tile you will find four areas: **First Reconciliation**, **First Holy Communion**, **Confirmation** and **Catechists' Resources**. When you click onto any of these four areas you will require a password to proceed further.

The password is: Godsgifts20

When you enter the three areas **First Reconciliation**, **First Holy Communion** or **Confirmation** you will find materials to guide the children and their families through the diocesan resources (the two *Heart Speaks to Heart* books and the *Empowered by the Spirit* pack of leaflets). Included among these materials are videos which introduce parents and carers to the resources; these are available for viewing either on Widescreen or on iPads/iPhones (see the **Videos** section for each Sacrament on the **First Sacraments** website tile). For those parents and carers who cannot access these videos there are guidance sheets (entitled **Help and Guidance**) which you may choose to distribute with the resource books or Confirmation pack when you give these out to families who do not have access to the internet.

Please note that we have suggested that the Confirmation sessions be reduced to six (covering two leaflets in each session). The Videos and Home Learning Sheets indicate how this has been done.

In the ***Catechists' Resources*** section you will find guidance to help you implement 'home learning' catechesis in your parish (***Home Learning Guidance*** for each of the three sacraments) and suggestions for feedback during online sessions or ***Feedback Sheets*** to distribute to candidates and families who are not able to participate in online meetings. There is also material which may be particularly useful for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.

Diocesan Resources for Sacramental Preparation

The Diocese now has high quality printed resources available for all three sacraments.

Confirmation (6 sessions)

Empowered by the Spirit: the Gift of Confirmation is a pack of 12 leaflets and 11 prayer and information cards. In the material we have produced, we suggest that leaflets are combined to form six sessions.

Holy Communion (7 Sessions)

Heart Speaks to Heart: the Gift of Holy Communion is a book (you may also like to purchase a drawstring bag for the children to collect their 'treasures' in).

Penance and Reconciliation (5 Sessions)

Heart Speaks to Heart: the Gift of Reconciliation is a book (you may also like to purchase a story book as a fun way for the children to reflect on Reconciliation).

Costs:

Confirmation pack (leaflets and cards):	£3.00 each
Holy Communion:	£3.00 for book
	£5.00 for book and drawstring bag
Reconciliation (two books):	£3.00 for book
	£5.00 for book and story book

Ordering and Delivery

These resources can be ordered from:

evangelisation.admin@dioceseofleeds.org.uk (0113 261 8040).

An ***Order Form for 1st Sacraments Resources*** is available on the ***Catechists' Resources*** section of the website. Once we have received your order, we will arrange with you for the collection of the resources. Delivery may be possible but please ask Emma, the Vicariate administrator, for details.

Online Materials for the Diocesan Resources

On the ***First Sacraments*** tile, there are more materials to support clergy and catechists in the delivery of these resources. These extra materials include more detailed notes for catechists in the delivery of the resources (under ***Catechists' Resources > Introduction for Catechists***).

Celebration of the Sacraments

Priests and parishes will have established ways to celebrate the sacraments as restrictions have been lifted, but please contact us or the Bishop's secretary if you need more guidance.

Confirmation

During this coming academic year (2021-2022), please contact the Bishop's Secretary with the date you have arranged for Confirmation (either as individual parishes or groups of parishes/Deanery); if the Bishop is available, he will celebrate the Sacrament at the date and time you have set or he will grant the faculty for a priest to celebrate Confirmation.

Alternatively, please write to the Bishop's secretary to arrange a date when the Bishop is available to celebrate the Sacrament of Confirmation in your parish/Deanery.

Conclusion

We would like to thank our priests and catechists and many of the staff in our schools for all you do to help our children to explore and celebrate the wonder of the sacraments, and who have worked so hard to ensure that our children receive the sacraments during these extraordinary times.

Please do not hesitate to get in touch if you think that we can be of further assistance:

evangelisation.admin@dioceseofleeds.org.uk (0113 261 8040)

timothy.swinglehurst@dioceseofleeds.org.uk